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ABSTRACT

This study reports information gathered from 82 of the 1,056 child care workers who participated in the Alabama Statewide Day Care Training Project, the first comprehensive training program for child care providers in the state. The project sponsored training workshops in four regions of the state and included correspondence study as an option. Topics covered included child abuse and neglect; working with parents; growth and development; handling behavior problems; planning an activity program; space for play and learning; special needs children; health and safety; child care center administration; and family day care management. Participation was free and voluntary. All respondents in the study were female, and respondents were primarily teachers, assistant teachers, or family day care providers who had worked in the field an average of 10 years. A total of 66% had some college education. Of the 82 respondents, 80 thought the workshops and correspondence units were helpful. More than half were willing to pay for additional training opportunities if the costs were low. Topics on parents, behavior problems, and activity programs were rated the most useful. It is concluded that additional training opportunities are needed in Alabama; that credit-based training should be considered; and that topics selected must meet providers' needs. The survey form is appended. Contains a reference list with 14 items. (LB)

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DAY CARE TRAINING IN ALABAMA:

A FOLLOW-UP STUDY

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1990

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Introduction

During 1986, the Jefferson County Child Development Council (JCCDC) and the Early Childhood Education faculty at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) were awarded a training grant by the Alabama Department of Human Resources. The goal of the project was to implement a child abuse education program, which was available to all child care providers in the State. Personnel at both JCCDC and UAB broadly interpreted this call for training to include the areas of child growth and development, developmentally appropriate discipline strategies, effective management of the environment, planning and organizing for individual needs, and professional business managements skills, as well as education in the identification and reporting of overt child abuse and neglect. Thus began the first comprehensive training program for child care providers in Alabama.

Previously, Alabama's day care providers had few available training opportunities. More possibilities existed in the larger cities than in the smaller towns and rural areas. Therefore, in order to maximize the potential of the training for all child care providers in the State, the 67 counties were divided into four regions. Each region had four separate workshop sites (making a total of sixteen sites).

Regions and sites were as follows:

Region 1: Montgomery, Andalusia, Dothan and Dadeville

Region 2: Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Anniston, Sylacauga

Region 3: Mobile, Livingston, Selma, Greenville

Region 4: Huntsville, Tuscumbia, Hamilton, Guntersville

A coordinator was employed for each region. Monthly workshops were held at each site. In addition to the workshops, child care providers were offered the opportunity to take correspondence study units instead of, or in addition to, attendance at workshops. The following topics were provided for workshops and the related correspondence study units:

Child Abuse and Neglect AND
Working with Parents
Growth and Development
Handling Behavior Problems
Planning an Activity Program
Space to Play and Learn
Special Needs Children
Health and Safety
Child Care Center Administration OR
Family Day Care Management

Regional coordinators were responsible for record keeping involving workshop attendance and satisfactory completion of correspondence study units.

Participation in the training program was voluntary. The training was provided at no cost to the participants. Approximately 1056 child care providers participated in one or more workshops and/or correspondence units during the

program (see footnote below). Those who had completed a minimum of six workshops and six correspondence units received three continuing education units from UAB. One hundred four (104) child care providers throughout the State participated at that level.

Materials Used in Training

The educational materials for this project were selected from the Family Day Care Education Series. They were developed by Thelma Harms and the staff at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The series consisted of information packets on thirteen subjects, and included most of those targeted for the Alabama training project (see reference list for specific packets used in the project). In addition to the packets, a Homebased Day Care Independent Study Course (Cryer, Bourland, Lewis & Harms, 1982), and a Family Day Care Resource Trainer's Manual (Harms, Bourland, Lewis, & Cryer, 1985) were available.

Footnote: In connection with the training program, a Statewide Child Care Conference was held at UAB in September, 1986. All training program participants were invited. Approximately 600 attended. The conference was the only level of participation for some of the providers.

Use of this series offered several advantages. The materials were inviting and practical, easy to read and use, and were relatively inexpensive when purchased in bulk. The materials were written on a fifth grade reading level, yet the content was professional and not condescending. The series content was consistent with project goals. In addition, the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECRS) (Harms & Clifford, 1980) was available and offered a reliable measurement tool consistent with the materials and project goals. The Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDRS) was under development by Harms and Clifford (1989) and was made available for project use.

The two limitations of the materials were that with the exception of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECRS), they had been developed specifically for use by family day care providers, and materials on the subject of child abuse were not available. However, project staff concluded that the material in the packets was suitable for use by preschool center classroom teachers, as well as by family day care providers. The correspondence study units were modified slightly to adapt activity choices for use in child care centers. Project staff developed a packet and correspondence unit on Child Abuse (Eddowes & Martin, 1986), following the format of the other packets.

At each workshop, a packet on the topic was given to one staff member from each day care center and to each

family day care provider, free of charge. If a day care teacher wanted to have a packet for personal use, additional packets were made available for $1.50 each. Participants who registered for the correspondence study course, as well as the workshops, received a free packet as well as a copy of the study unit. Participants who enrolled in the correspondence course only, received a packet and study unit through the mail at no charge. Participants in the correspondence course who did not attend workshops were expected to pay the postage to return their units for evaluation. A toll-free telephone number was publisned on all correspondence units, so that the participants would have ready access to project staff as they completed their units.

Statement of the Problem

The training program decribed above was available only during the year, 1986. The level of participation in the training varied from attendance at the conference, one workshop or the completion of one correspondence unit, to completion of all workshops and correspondence units. No provision had been made in the original proposal for a longitudinal evalution of the participants. Information concerning the value of this training may have the potential for providing assistance in planning future training opportunities for day care providers in Alabama.

Method

Since no funds were available to complete a comprehensive follow-up study of all participants, the decision was made to mail surveys only to those providers who had participated at the highest level in the training program (a minimum of six workshops and six correspondence units). Those providers were the ones who had shown the most interest, and consequently, were the most likely to provide comprehensive feed-back concerning the training. The cost of such a survey was a reasonable expense for the researchers to assume. Therefore, in this present study, the 104 providers who had participated at the highest level in the training program were surveyed two years after completion of the original project.

Survey Instrument

Researchers developed a survey instrument (Appendix A) to gather data concerning respondents' employment, educational background, rating of workshops/correspondence courses completed, value of the training, participation in training opportunities during the intervening two years, interest in additional training, and potential topics for additional training.

The survey was mailed with a cover letter (Appendix B) and a post-paid return envelope to each of the training participants who had received the continuing education units. The were told that if they completed and returned

the survey, they would receive copies of the NAEYC publications, Bibliography of Books for Teachers and Parents and Helping Children Learn about Reading. If the survey was not returned in six weeks time, a second copy was mailed with a different cover letter (Appendix C).

Information from the surveys was coded and analyzed by computer. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were used.

Results

Eighty-two female providers (79%) from 29 counties responded to the survey. Fifty-two zip copes were represented. Table 1 shows the regional representation. Table 2 shows the county representation.

Table 1

Regional Representation of Respondents and Non-Respondents

Region	Frequency of Respondents	Frequency of Non-Respondents	Percent Response
Region 1	25	2	93
Region 2	18	4	82
Region 3	15	5	75
Region 4	34	10	71
Total	82	22	79

Table 2

County Representation of Respondents

County	Frequency
Autauga	3
Barbour	4
Butler	1
Calhoun	1
Chambers	1
Colbert	3
Covington	3
Dale	2
Elmore	5
Etowah	1
Franklin	2
Greene	4
Houston	1
Jefferson	10
Lauderdale	2
Lee	1
Lowndes	1
Madison	11
Marion	4
Marshall	1
Mobile	9
Montgomery	1
Morgan	1
Randolph	1
Talladega	2
Tallapoosa	3
Tuscaloosa	1
Walker	2
Wilcox	1
Total	82

Seventy respondents were employed in child care or related jobs, five were employed in non-child care jobs and two didn't respond to the question. Table 3 shows the types of programs in which respondents were employed.

Table 3

Programs in which Respondents were Employed

Program	Frequency	%
Day Care Center	47	67.1
Family Day Care Home	16	22.9
Head Start	4	5.7
Nursery School	1	1.4
Private Home	1	1.4
Social Agency	1	1.4
Total	70	

Although a number of directors and assistant directors responded, the majority of respondents were teachers, assistant teachers, and family day care home providers. See Table 4.

Table 4

Positions of Respondents Employed in Child Care

Position	Frequency	%
Director	12	17.1
Assistant Director	6	.6
Teacher	31	44.3
Assistant Teacher	5	7.1
Family Day Care Provider	16	22.9
Total	70	

The majority of the respondents worked primarily with infants and toddlers. See Table 5 for ages of children.

Table 5

Ages of Children with whom Respondents Worked

Children's Ages	Frequency	%
Infant-Toddler	37	52.9
Preschool	28	40.0
Kindergarten	3	4.3
2 1/2 - 12 years	1	1.4
Other	1	1.4
Total	70	

The seventy respondents had been employed in child care for up to thirty years (*M*=10.42; *SD*=5.83). They had been employed in the current position for up to twenty-one years (*M*=7.26; *SD*=4.88).

Fifty-seven (81%) of the 70 respondents were employed in the same position as they had been in when they were in the training program. Thirteen of the respondents who had remained in the child care field had changed positions. Reasons for changing positions are found in Table 6.

Table 6

Reasons Child Care Employees Changed Position

Reason	Frequency
New Job/Different Center	4
Promotion/Same Center	3
Moved to Older Group/Same Center	4
Working More Hours/Same Center	2
Total	13

Twelve of the 82 respondents who had completed the survey were no longer employed in child care. Their reasons for leaving that field are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Reasons for Leaving the Child Care Field

Reason	Frequency
Needed Less Demanding Position	1
Had a Baby	1
Retired	4
Lost License	1
No Response	5
Total	12

Forty-six respondents (66%) had completed some college work. Eight had a college degree. Three of those degrees were in Early Childhood Education/Child Development. See Table 8 for the educational level of the respondents.

Table 8

Highest Educational Level of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	%
GED	4	4.9
High School Diploma	21	25.6
CDA	3	3.7
Some College Work (ECE/CD)	35	42.7
Some College Work (None in ECE)	11	13.4
ECE/CD Degree (4 year)	3	3.7
Other Degree (4 year)	3	3.7
Graduate Work (None in ECE)	2	2.4
Total	82	

Respondents rated the workshops and correspondence study units which they had completed during the training program. The ratings of respondents and the percentages for each level are shown in Table 9.

The majority of the respondents thought that a combination of workshops and correspondence units was the most helpful. Seventy-one liked a combination, five preferred workshops alone, two preferred correspondence units alone, and four did not answer the question.

Eighty of the respondents thought that the training was

Table 9

Ratings of Workshops/Correspondence Units

Workshops/Corres. Units *	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Only a Little Helpful	A Waste of Time
Child Care Center Administration	30 (52%)	23 (40%)	5 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Family Day Care Management	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Child Abuse & Neglect	54 (69%)	22 (28%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Working with Parents	56 (74%)	17 (22%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Handling Behavior Problems	55 (72%)	16 (21%)	5 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Growth and Development	54 (69%)	22 (28%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Planning an Activity Program	50 (67%)	21 (28%)	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Special Needs Children	45 (63%)	21 (29%)	6 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Space to Play and Learn	46 (60%)	25 (33%)	3 (4%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
Health and Safety	53 (69%)	20 (26%)	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

* Providers were required to complete six workshops and correspondence unit pairs for the highest level of participation. Some completed more than six.

helpful, one thought it was somewhat helpful, and one person did not answer the question. Forty-two of the repondents had completed some type of training in the past two years (after completing the State-Wide Training Program), 36 had not, and four didn't answer the item. Table 10 shows the types of training in which respondents had participated.

Table 10

Training Participation in Past Two Years

Types	Frequency
College Workshops	5
CDA	1
In-Service Workshops	27
Church Workshops	2
CPR	1
Read Books	1
No Training	36

When respondents were asked if they would participate in additional state-sponsored day care training if available, sixty-three said 'yes'. Fifteen checked 'maybe' and only three said 'no'. On person did not answer the question. Forty-six said that they would pay for additional training, three checked 'maybe', and 18 were not willing to pay for additional training. Thirty-seven noted the amount they would be willing to pay for one workship. The range was from $2.00 through $75.00. The mean was $15.50 and the median was $10.00. Twelve respondents said that they would be willing to pay $10.00 (mode).

First and second choice of topics suggested for workshops are shown in Table 11. Not all respondents answered this question.

Table 11

Suggested Topics for Additional Training

Topic	First Choice	Second Choice
Child Care Center Administration	5	3
Family Day Care Management	0	1
Child Abuse & Neglect	2	1
Working with Parents	0	4
Handling Behavior Problems	18	7
Growth and Development	2	3
Planning an Activity Program	16	6
Special Needs Children	9	5
Space to Play and Learn	3	2
Health and Safety	3	2
All Topics	5	1

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement concerning eight statements which reflected the possible value of the day care training for them. The ratings of respondents and the percentages for each level are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Value of Participation in Day Care Training

Statement *	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My understanding and expectations of children have imporved.	34 (44%)	35 (45%)	8 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I have more information about handling suspected cases of child abuse.	35 (45%)	35 (45%)	4 (5%)	4 (5%)	0 (0%)
My discipline skills have improved.	33 (43%)	35 (45%)	8 (10%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
I have a better understanding of the Alabama licensing regulations.	24 (32%)	38 (51%)	10 (14%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
My confidence when talking with parents has improved.	40 (51%)	30 (38%)	8 (10%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
I feel more professional in my work.	47 (60%)	24 (30%)	6 (8%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
I have more knowledge concerning the child care field.	42 (55%)	31 (41%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I found workshop packet materials helpful.	53 (67%)	23 (29%)	1 (1%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)

* All items were not marked by all respondents.

Respondents were asked to note the training materials that they had used the most. Materials listed first and second are shown in Table 13. Not all persons answered this question.

Table 13

Training Materials Found to be Most Useful

Training Packets	Listed First	Listed Second
Child Care Center Administration	2	2
Family Day Care Management	2	1
Child Abuse & Neglect	6	3
Working with Parents	14	6
Handling Behavior Problems	12	7
Growth and Development	1	2
Planning an Activity Program	13	7
Special Needs Children	1	3
Space to Play and Learn	2	2
Health and Safety	3	5
All Topics	12	1

Discussion

This study provided information from eighty-two child care workers who had participated at the highest level in the Alabama Statewide Day Care Training Project in 1986. Results have the potential for providing assistance in planning future training opportunities for day care providers in the State.

All respondents were female and were representative of the State's geographic regions as well as the types of child care providers. The majority were teachers, assistant teachers or family day care providers. About half worked with infants and toddlers. The other half worked with children who were over two and one-half years of age. The respondents had been working in the child care field for an average of ten years, and they had been employed in their current positions an average of seven years. As a group, they showed stability of employment both in the child care field and in their current positions.

The respondents had come to the training program with a relatively high educational background. Sixty-six percent had already completed some college courses, and, of these respondents who had completed college work, forty-six percent had completed courses in early childhood education and/or child development. This compares similarly with information contained in the Executive Summary of the

National Child Care Staffing Study (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989), which showed that personnel in day care centers had completed more college work than females in the general population. That study also found that ". . . the amount of formal education obtained by a teacher was the strongest predictor of appropriate teacher behavior, with specialized training emerging as an additional predictor in infant classrooms." (p. 9) Respondents in the present study were interested in further training but few opportunities were available to them. Since the Statewide training was completed, the majority of the respondents had not participated in any training. Only five had attended a college workshop. About thirty-two percent had attended short in-service workshops.

Eighty of the respondents thought that the workshops and correspondence units in the training program were quite helpful. Most of them particularly liked a combination of workshops and correspondence units. Over half of the respondents in the study said that they would be willing to pay for training opportunities but that the cost must be fairly low ($10-$15 per workshop or module).

Topics suggested for training covered a range of subjects. However, the ones chosen most often were, "Handling Behavior Problems," Planning an Activity Program," and "Special Needs Children." Materials found to be most

useful after completion of the training were, "Working with Parents," "Handling Behavior Problems, "Planning an Activity Program." Twelve respondents thought that all materials had been helpful since the training.

The value of the training received by the respondents was rated positively. Although availability of workshop packet materials was rated highest, other items rated high in value were respondents' increased feelings of professionalism, knowledge concerning the child care field. and confidence when talking with parents.

Implications of the Study for Future State-Sponsored Training

1). The need is there for child care training opportunities throughout all areas of Alabama. Such opportunities should be available for personnel working with infants, toddlers and preschool aged children. Future costs by the State for training similar to that completed by the respondents in this study should be considered an investment in quality. Caregivers who invest their time in in-depth study are not likely to contribute to high turnover in the field.

2). The format of the credit-based training which included a combination of workshops and independent study units should be considered for any State supported child care training program. Study units should be available for personnel working with different age levels.

3). A potential child care training program in Alabama could be partially funded by fee for service from the participants. However, both format and materials selected for future training must address a range of educational backgrounds.

4). The topics selected for any potential training must meet child care providers' needs. Many participants will make use of training materials and refer to them after initial training is completed.

5). Systematic, thoughtful training opportunities with appropriate feed-back will provide value to the participants which will improve their self-esteem and confidence, increase their child care knowledge, and assist them in improving in their work with Alabama's children. Any cost to the State will be returned by improving the quality of available child care in the State.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

ALABAMA STATE-WIDE CHILD CARE TRAINING PROJECT

Follow-up Survey

Name_____ Home Phone_____

Address_____

City_____ Zip_____County_____

Are you employed? Yes_____ No_____

If so, where?_____

Address_____

City_____ Zip_____ County_____

Your Position_____

Ages of children with whom you work?_____

How long in this position?_____

How long employed in child care?_____

Are you currently employed in the same position you were in when you completed the day care training? Yes_____ No_____

If not, explain:_____

Please describe your educational background. Check all that apply:

____ Below 8th Grade
____ Some High School
____ GED
____ H.S. Diploma
____ CDA Credential
____ Some College (Child Dev./Education/Related Field)
____ Some College (Other Area, Please Note:_____)
____ 4 Year College Degree (Child Dev./Educ./Related Field)
____ 4 Year College Degree (Other Area, Please Note:_____)
____ Graduate Courses. Please name field:_____
____ Graduate Degree. Please name field:_____

Rate the workshops/correspondence units which you completed in the Day Care Training Project:

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Only a Little Helpful	A Waste of Time
Child Care Center Administration	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Family Day Care Management	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Child Abuse & Neglect	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Working with Parents	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Handling Behavior Problems	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Growth and Development	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Planning an Activity Program	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Special Needs Children	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Space to Play and Learn	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Health and Safety	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Which do you think helped you the most? Workshops _____
Correspondence Units _____
Combination of Both _____

Overall, did you think this training was helpful?
Yes_____ Somewhat_____ No_____

Have you participated in any training in the past two years? Yes____ No___
Please Describe:_____
_____

Would you participate in additional state-sponsored day care training, if available?
Yes___ Maybe_____ No_____

Would you be willing to pay for training? Yes_____No____

What would be a reasonable price for one workshop? $_____

List topics which you would be interested in learning about:_____ _____
_____
_____

Rate each statement listed below concerning your level of agreement or disagreement.

As a result of my participation in the day care training:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My understanding and expectations of children have improved.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I have more information about handling suspected cases of child abuse.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
My discipline skills have improved.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I have a better understanding of the Alabama licensing regulations.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
My confidence when talking with parents has improved.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I feel more professional in my work.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I have more knowledge concerning the child care field.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I found workshop packet materials helpful.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

List those materials you have used the most:_____

_____

_____

Comments:

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter

The University of Alabama at Birmingham
School of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
205/934-5371 Telex: 888826 UAB BHM

January 8, 1989

Dear Child Care Provider:

During 1986, you were enrolled in a Statewide Day Care Training Program co-sponsored by the Jefferson County Child Development Council and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. You completed at least six workshops and six correspondence units in the program.

Now, two years later, we would like some information from you concerning that program. A short survey is enclosed. We would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it in the post-paid envelope by February 5. Your answers will be kept confidential. If you have any questions concerning the survey, please call Kathleen Martin at 1-800-456-2160.

We appreciate your assistance. Each person who responds will receive a Bibliography of Books for Teachers and Parents and Helping Children Learn about Reading. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Anne Eddowes

Anne Eddowes

Kathleen Martin

Kathleen Martin

AE/KM/s

UAB Station / Birmingham, Alabama 35294
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APPENDIX C

Follow-up Cover Letter

The University of Alabama at Birmingham
School of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
205/934-5371 Telex: 888826 UAB BHM

March 13, 1989

Dear Child Care Provider,

Several weeks ago we mailed a survey to you concerning your perceptions of the Alabama Statewide Day Care Training Program. You completed the program in 1986. We would like to hear from you even if you are no longer in the child care field.

Another copy of the survey is enclosed. We would appreciate it if you would complete it and return it in the addressed, stamped envelope. We appreciate your assistance. It will be of help in planning future workshops.

Sincerely,

E. Anne Eddowes

E. Anne Eddowes

Kathleen Martin

Kathleen Martin

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